passenger amenities at the railway stations have deteriorated since the past about one year;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any surprise checks have been conducted to find out the factors responsible for bottlenecks in passenger amenities;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(f) the concrete measures taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to streamline the passenger amenities at the railway stations?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : (a) There has been no deterioration.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) to (e) Regular and surprise inspections are conducted by Railway officers and supervisory staff at various levels in order to ensure that requisite passenger amenities are available and well maintained. As a follow up of these inspections, corrective action is being taken, where necessary. In addition, Service Improvement Groups have been constituted at important stations with a view to have a multi-disciplinary approach to the upkeep and improvement in the services provided. These Groups consist of Officers/Supervisory staff from various Departments and function at Station, Divisional and Headquarters levels.

(f) Minimum facilities have been provided at all stations. Norms based on volume of traffic at stations have been laid down for provision of various amenities viz. waiting hall, sitting accommodation, drinking water, latrine and urinals, booking arrangements, water coolers, waiting rooms, covered-sheds etc. Allocation of funds for amenities are constantly being increased from year to year.

Besides, for the convenience of the passengers, reserved accommodation on trains through Computerised Passenger Reservation System has been extended to 271 locations upto 31.3.96 covering about 92% of the total reserved accommodation. Enquiry Offices are also being upgraded by providing Inter-active Voice Response System (IVRS) for telephonic enquiries, improved announcement and display systems.

Monitoring Cells at Ministry, Zonal and Divisional Railway Headquarters levels have also been set up for monitoring passenger complaints related to passenger amenities.

[Translation]

Train Accidents

*120. SHRI RADHA MOHAN SINGH :
DR. RAMESH CHAND TOMAR :

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of train accidents took place during the last three years along with the details of the number of persons killed/injured therein;

(b) whether inquiries have been conducted in respect of each accident;

(c) if so, the findings thereof; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government to check recurrence of train accidents?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : (a) Information is as under :

	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96
Number of consequential train accidents	520	501	398
Number of passengers			
Killed	179	84	406
Injured	446	434	681
Railway staff			
Killed	20	19	37
Injured	89	91	77
Others			
Killed	180	202	151
Injured	370	162	177

(b) Yes, Sir. Each and every accident is enquired into by a Committee of Officers. Serious accidents are enquired into by the Commission of Railway Safety, which functions under the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism.

(c) Causes of train accidents during the three years are as under :

Broad Causes	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96
1. Failure of railway staff	358	351	237
2. Failure of persons other than railway staff	72	76	71
3. Equipment failure	55	38	50
4. Sabotage	16	9	16
5. Incidental	8	15	11
6. Combination of factors	2	2	3
7. Could not be established conclusively	9	10	10
	520	591	398

(d) Some of the measures taken to improve safety and prevent accidents are as under :

(i) The work of track circuiting has been accelerated on the trunk routes and other important main lines.

(ii) Modification of the Signalling circuitry is being carried out to minimise chances of human error in causing accidents.

(iii) Auxiliary Warning System for giving advance warning about 'Signal at danger' to the driver of the running train has been commissioned on Bombay suburban sections.

(iv) There has been progressive increase in use of Tie Tamping and ballast cleaning machines for track maintenance.

(v) For monitoring track geometry and running characteristics of the track, sophisticated track recording cars, oscillograph cars and portable accelerometers are being progressively used.

(vi) Maintenance facilities for coaches and wagons have been modernised and upgraded at many depots.

(vii) To prevent cases of cold breakage of axles, ROH Depots have been equipped with ultrasonic testing equipment for detection of flaws in the axles.

(viii) Whistle boards/speed breakers and road signs have been provided at unmanned level crossings and visibility for drivers has been improved.

(ix) Audio-visual publicity campaigns to educate road users on how to make a safe crossing are conducted.

(x) Steps have been taken to prevent inflammable and explosive materials from being carried in passenger trains.

(xi) Training facilities for drivers, guards and staff connected with train operation have been modernised including use of Simulators for training of drivers.

(xii) Refresher courses are regularly organised at specified intervals.

(xiii) Performance of the staff connected with train operation is being constantly monitored and those found deficient are sent for crash training.

(xiv) Periodical safety drives are conducted to inculcate safety consciousness among the staff.

Change in Patna Bound Shatabdi Express Route

920. SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have received any request/suggestion for changing the route of Delhi-Patna bound Shatabdi Express via Moradabad and Bareilly; and

(b) if so, the time by which final decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) There is no Shatabdi Express between New Delhi and Patna. However, some representations have been received for routing New Delhi-Patna Rajdhani Express via Moradabad-Bareilly.

(b) Diversion of the Rajdhani Express via Moradabad-Bareilly was not found feasible due to longer running time and other operational difficulties en-route.

[English]

Gratuity to PSU Employees

921. SHRI AJOY MUKHOPADHYAY : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have scrapped the proposal to increase the amount of gratuity payable to employees of Public Sector Undertakings from 1 lakh to 2.5 lakhs i.e. at par with Central Government Employees;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the said proposal was already approved by the earlier Government;

(d) if so, whether the Government propose to enhance the amount as mentioned above; and

(e) if so, by when?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) to (e). The Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 was amended and ceiling on the maximum amount of gratuity was last enhanced in May, 1994 from Rs. 50,000/- to Rs. 1,00 Lakh. Consequent on enhancement in the amount of gratuity from Rs. 1,00 lakh to Rs. 2,50 lakh payable to the Central Government employees, demands have been received for similar enhancement in the case of the employees working in the public sector undertakings. As the P.G. Act applies to establishments including Central and State PSUs and its provisions are being administered mainly by State Governments, the proposal has been referred to State Governments, the Employers' and Employees' Organisations for their comments. As the proposal also involves amendment of the Act, it is difficult to indicate the time limit by when the amount of gratuity under the P.G. Act will be enhance.

Mineral Reserves

922. SHRI HARADHAN ROY :
SHRI K.P. SINGH DEO :
SHRI NARAYAN ATHAWALAY :

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to refer to the reply given to Unstarred Question No. 3191 on 18th December, 1995 regarding mineral reserves and state:

(a) whether the requisite information have since been collected;